

Ex-Army Agent Tells of Snooping

Part 115/71
By Donald M. Rothberg
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A former military undercover agent says he spied for nearly six months on a Colorado youth group and its leader because a lieutenant colonel feared they would turn soldiers against the Vietnam war.

The former agent, Oliver A. Pierce, now a civilian living near Boston, said in an interview that the main object of his surveillance in Colorado Springs, Colo., was Jerry Kvasnicka.

"The lieutenant colonel who was the G2 (intelligence) at Ft. Carson said he thought Jerry Kvasnicka was more dangerous to GIs at the fort than some of the more militant people because he would get GIs into his youth group and then would indoctrinate them with antiwar beliefs," Pierce said.

Pierce said he got to know Kvasnicka and others in the Young Adult Project as part of his undercover assignment in the last six months of 1969.

Georgetown Student

One of Kvasnicka's friends, John Thomas, now a law student at Georgetown University in Washington, remembers Pierce.

"I first met him at a Presbyterian Church meeting," Thomas said. "I knew he was a GI at Ft. Carson. He said he was a clerk shuffling papers." Pierce said he reported regularly to his Army boss on the activities of the group and Kvasnicka.

He said he told his superior "that this shouldn't be done, that there was no justification. But he wanted me to continue there, if only as a listening post."

Defense is Colorado Springs' biggest industry. The city of 124,000 is ringed with military installations, including the Air Force Academy, two air bases, the North American Air Defense Command, and Ft. Carson.

Pierce said the Army had two competing military intelligence units at Colorado Springs. The unit he was in operated out of Ft. Carson, the other out of downtown Colorado Springs.

Pierce said the Army's method of determining who needs watching is very decentralized. "It depends on the attitude of the commanding officer or, in this case, the G2," he

said. Other former agents confirmed this view.

"Each local commander had autonomy. What we collected as a matter of his judgment," recalled one ex-agent who had been stationed in Minneapolis.

Apparently in Race

This former agent, who would not allow use of his name, added:

"The Army, Navy and Air Force seemed to be in a race to become the sole investigative agency for the Defense Department. There always seemed to be rumors there was about to be a reorganization that would combine all investigative work into one agency."

Another former agent who worked in the Washington area said there often was a rigid military determination to adhere to the letter of an order.

"We might be asked for the names of the 10 most active radical groups in an area. If there were only four active groups, we'd have to come up with the names of six others," said this ex-agent, who would not be identified.

"When a request came for information, we would just amass a file and send it along and let somebody else decide what it was for," said another former agent, who also declined use of his name.

U. of Minnesota

To Probe Army Spying

MINNEAPOLIS, Jan. 4—University of Minnesota President Malcolm Moos ordered an investigation into charges that the university's police department had cooperated with Army intelligence agents in gathering information on students and faculty.

Moos declared that it would be a clear violation of university policy henceforth for any unit of the university to provide any law enforcement or

intelligence agency with information about the political and social beliefs or actions of "any member of this university community" without his knowledge and consent.